

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

HUMAN HEREDITY

Verhandlungen des V. Internationalen Kongresses für Vererbungswissenschaft.
Vol. II. (Pp. 861.) Leipzig, 1928.
Borntraeger. Unpriced.

THE first volume of the *Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress on Heredity* was reviewed in this REVIEW last October. This second volume completes the Proceedings of the Congress. In its 861 pages there are three papers that are definitely eugenic, and many that bear on human inheritance and problems connected with eugenics. Lidbetter's is a straightforward eugenic paper on inheritance in pauper families, a subject on which he has done so much important work. Lécaillon's paper is also eugenic, though the author himself uses instead the unusual term "anthropogenetic." There is little in it that will be new to eugenicists. He is opposed on the whole to sterilization, preferring the segregation of those with inherited defects. He favours legislation making compulsory the exchange of pre-nuptial certificates of freedom from inherited defects. He makes the remarkable statement that certain eugenicists suppose that the descendants of degenerates will in the course of generations gradually become rarer and rarer through natural causes, and will finally disappear altogether. Such a view will find few adherents in view of such work as that of Lidbetter. Thomsen's paper, on race-mixture, is the third that must be classified as eugenic.

Hanson and Heys prove that the subsection of rats to the fumes of alcohol through ten generations has no effect on the germ cells. The modifications induced by alcoholization (blindness and resistance to alcohol) are not inherited. The sex ratio is also unaffected. MacDowell also shows that alcoholization, whether by fumes or injection, is without effect on the sex ratio. These two papers, based as they are on most elaborate and painstaking investigations,

make one sceptical of the results of earlier workers on the same subject.

There is an interesting paper by Mjöen on the inheritance of musical ability. After giving the genealogies of some noted musical families, the author proceeds to a statistical investigation of the subject. He classifies people as "very musical," "musical," and "not musical," and shows that when two of the first group marry, 72 ± 9 per cent. of their children are "very musical," while if two of the last group marry, 90 ± 6 per cent. of their children are "not musical" and none are "very musical." When one parent is "very musical" and the other is "not musical," the three types of children ("very musical," "musical," and "not musical") are about equally numerous. Evidently, many factors are concerned in the inheritance of musical ability.

Lynch shows that in mice susceptibility to tar-induced tumours is inherited, and that the factors for susceptibility seem to be dominant. Wlissidis gives a good genealogy of a family in which albinism occurs. Hirschfeld stresses the inheritance of a tendency to all grades of intersexuality, from hermaphroditism to homosexuality, in mankind. Von Verschuer gives a statistical analysis of the effects of different modes of life on the bodily measurements of identical twins.

The two most remarkable papers are those of Swoboda, who is obsessed by the remarkable qualities of the number seven. If a man has had many children all of the same sex, and at last a child of the opposite sex is born, the man's age is commonly a multiple of seven on the auspicious occasion! Similarly, when a male tends to become feminine or *vice versa*, its (one cannot say his or her) age is often 14, 21, or 28. Parents also tend to produce mentally abnormal children at intervals of seven years. Bald, improbable statements of this sort are clearly useless. The case could only be made out by elaborate statistical investigation.

The reviewer feels that he must mention what is a serious defect in a book of this type and size. Builders do not ask us to live in half-built houses, nor cooks to eat half-cooked food; but publishers have no qualms about issuing half-finished books. It took *fifty minutes* to cut the pages of the reviewer's copy. Many of those who would like to peruse the Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress have not fifty minutes to waste.

J. R. BAKER.

BIOGRAPHY

Peterson, Houston. *Havelock Ellis.*
London, 1929. Allen & Unwin. Pp.
432. Price 18s.

THIS American life of Havelock Ellis was prepared with the sanction and assistance of Mr. Ellis himself. I have read it with great interest, since I have long been a sincere admirer of this author, and have all his books, with one important exception, in my library. The exception is Mr. Ellis's great work in six volumes, on the Psychology of Sex. I bought the two first volumes, and then burnt them as poisonous literature. Poisonous I am afraid they are, though the author is unable to realize it. The whole plan of this book, which he intended to be the main work of his life, was conceived with a strange lack of wisdom. If, instead of beginning with the most repulsive parts of of the pathology of sex, he had treated first the normal psychology of love and marriage, and had then added a volume on perversions, he would probably have found a respectable publisher to accept the book, and would not have been driven to employ a shady adventurer who afterwards destroyed himself, and to issue the work as from 'the University Press, Watford.' Nor is it easy to see why the victims of almost unmentionable perversions should have been invited to dictate detailed descriptions of their revolting habits. These, I cannot help thinking, are the errors in judgment of a detached

scientific thinker; for a long time they injured his reputation and impaired his influence.

But we do not wish to dwell on this unlucky mistake when we think of Havelock Ellis. The public has now learned that his contributions to an important branch of social and personal hygiene are admitted by all experts to be of great value. This the public is willing to take for granted. But it has also learned to honour in him a mind of very rare elevation. He has been content to remain in poverty at a time when fortunes are easily made by popular sex-books. He has borne obloquy and neglect without a trace of bitterness, and with a certain proud dignity. He is now at last recognized not only as a fearless and trenchant social critic, and as the 'philosopher of love,' as Mr. Peterson calls him, but as a master of English style, and a man of very wide and delicate cultivation. Few English writers have so deftly interpreted to us the distinctive features of French and Spanish civilization. Few have shown a subtler appreciation of the parts of England which he loves best, the East Anglia from which his ancestors came, and the Cornwall where he spends his holidays.

That he is a proud intellectual aristocrat cannot be denied. Without this quality he could hardly have faced the public with such indifference. There seems to be an echo of Nietzsche when he says, 'I do not like drinking at those pools which are turbid from the hoofs of my fellow-creatures; when I cannot get there before the others I like to wait a considerable time after they have left.' He has done great service to his generation by often 'getting there before the others'; an example is his reasoned advocacy of birth-control; but when 'the others' have made his views popular, he leaves them as if he hated anything like popularity. We are told that much of his time is taken up with correspondence; he is easily persuaded, it seems, to gratify the curiosity of obscure strangers. For the rest, he leads a cheerful and healthy old age, secure at last of the fame for which he cares so little. Our age and country have seen